

and her most direct and legitimate work in the present day appears to be that of presenting to us in our places of public resort the idealised resemblance, not of the mere man of rank, raised by the accident of birth, but of the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, or by whatever other special name we distinguish the individuals included in that pre-eminent order of good and great men; and it is much to be wished that Sculpture would walk with wider and truer step through this path of her manifestation. The Greeks of old raised statues to wrestlers, and it may be questioned if we have awarded them much more worthily. Votive sculpture, in the shape of statues, has been raised to many who, living, could advance no claim whatever, and what is worthily voted has been too much monopolised for one or two classes of great men. Warriors and statesmen are not the only men who deserve well of society; nor are the faculties that lead to success in their professions the greatest endowments of man. These have their claim; but there are men of a higher mission. The poet is the "crowned one" of the world's benefactors; for poetry is the alpha and omega of all knowledge. Nevertheless, there is another guiding principle that should have influence in the distribution of such honours. Among the departed great, immortalised by the chisel, I would of course have poets, artists, engineers, architects; but there is a class of men, large benefactors of their kind, who, as their labours do not assume so tangible and visible a form, have more need of monumental commemoration to extend and perpetuate their just fame;—I allude to such men as Watt, Sir Humphry Davy, Arkwright, for the most part quiet followers of science; some scarce known to the general mass of the people, to whom posterity, without such mementoes, is likely to meet but scantily the meed of praise, whose memories therefore most need such offerings. In behalf of these especially, and of all true benefactors of their kind, it is devoutly to be wished that sculpture would, in such material as best suits our varying climate, stand out more openly in the sight of all men; and from the village highway, the town market-place, or city hall, notify in the imagery of her æsthetic language, the worth and genius that had in such locality found a birth or an abiding place, illumining the spot with the serene graces of art; and from her pedestals of honour proclaim to the daily life around, those incentive lessons of spiritual exaltation, failing which, man's life sinks to the level of the brutes without the palliation of its moral innocence.

What, for instance, if the sun, that struggles through the smoky atmosphere of our northern commercial metropolis, should gild with its beams the statue of Roscoe; or, through the thick fogs that darken the busy thoroughfares of Manchester, should loom the sculptured image of Cheetham or of Dalton? What, if the mountain breeze, that sweeps over the seclusion of Grassmere, should kiss with whitening lip the votive image of Wordsworth; while the smoke that rises from the lowly roof where Shakespeare first saw the light, should, as it melts to air in its passage towards his quiet grave, hover round a modern statue of one who even now we feel as fully as when it was first written, "Was not made for an age, but for all time?" What, if thus standing forth in the common way of common life, these kindred mute orators should, by their presence, typify and exhort to higher things; and to the weary plodder of the street or road should say, "We once were men lowly and weak as you, by fortune as slighted, and by trouble as tried; but from the depths of our social humiliation, from the darkening tumult of our distress, we looked up with an eye of hopeful endurance on the calm heaven of beauty, of goodness, and of truth; and in the strength of deep faith, with earnest toil, have earned the title of friends and benefactors to mankind; and passing by the heraldic honours of titular dignity as a failing and unstable thing, have achieved an entry into the higher and more enduring roll of the nobility of God: go, thou, and do likewise." What if this were spoken in the beautiful language of sculpture, throughout the length and breadth of the land, where-

ever genius had wrought its work? Would art be made too common and degenerate? Or would life be rendered too ideal and enervated? I trow not. True, there is an obstacle in the inartistic contour of the modern style of dress, which must to some extent render the task of the sculptor more difficult than formerly; but, as I think, not so much so, but that a deeper feeling in the artist, and a wider comprehension in the spectator, might find means to obviate.

The idealisation of form, which Sculpture effects through absolute relief, Painting establishes by the magic of colour and chiaroscuro: in her hands, art glows with the flush of life; and to the beauty of outline she adds an art-perpetuation of that veritable beauty of being which it is her peculiar province to express. Like her sister branches of art, she made her first appearance in the service of the temple, though she seems to have been destined to a longer period of infancy; for (while giving the fullest weight to the testimony of Pliny and others, as to the excellence of the painters of antiquity in the earlier ages) at its first appearance painting seems, as I before observed, to have partaken more of the nature of polychrome decoration than of a work of art. But in the hands of the Greeks it appears to have gradually developed its powers through the careful delineations of the cestrum and the monochrome, up to the pencil and the full scale of colour. Of the productions of their great painters none have descended to us, but the testimony of ancient writers warrants us in concluding them to have been both true and excellent works of art, though their custom of applying colour to sculpture, and the rather unaccommodating nature of their vehicle—the oil method being unknown—would lead us to attribute to themselves singularity of taste, and to their works a technical deficiency, as compared with the manageable materials and vehicles of later and modern times.

In its progress, both of decline and revival, painting appears to have followed the path of sculpture; and in the early mediæval specimens, in the hardness of outline, the pattern-like imitations of form, the crude nakedness of colour, we see the subject-matter of the art cramped within the limits of an undiscerning conventionalism, as was the statue of the saint within the limits of his narrow niche. Yet, in like manner as in the sister-art, we oftentimes see, amid barbaric gauds of colour, and semi-childish simplicities of invention, hints and presences of ideal sentiment and expression, which, like the morning star, heralded the brightness of the coming day. And the day came; in that memorable time when, from the conquered walls of Byzantium, came out the relics of classic learning; when from the market-place of Wittenburgh blazed up the light of intellectual freedom; when from the presses of Germany welled out the stream of knowledge; and the west wind that curled the Atlantic wave came fraught with the breath of discovery,—then art awoke to the glory of her ancient strength, and put on the garment of her beauty, reaching in the design of M. Angelo, the expression of Raphael, and the colouring of Titian, a height of power never since surpassed.

After what has been advanced relative to the sculptor's province in the present day, little need be said on that of the painter, as far as history and portraiture are concerned. The latter are fields he can only share with the sculptor; but landscape art is one in which there can be no rivalry with sculpture: it is peculiar to the painter, and is his private walk, untrod by any other. As the branch of painting peculiar to the moderns it claims some notice here. What is chiefly to be desired in reference to it is, that the artist would, as he has been emphatically advised by Ruskin, walk lovingly and trustingly with Nature, and render in his works his own impressions, and not any conventionalism that may have been put for her by foregone painters. The landscape artist is to see nature with his own eyes, and not through the medium of the school; and give his whole energy to a truthful rendering of her facts, on

which all his combinations are to be based. And though the same object may thus come to be differently rendered by different artists, yet if each has given his own impression of it, its image on his own soul, their works will all be true pictures—psychical truths. In thus faithfully representing nature the artist follows the example of the poet, who but holds the mirror up to nature, and with him he will find no lack of room for the faculties of genius. Imagination and feeling are to penetrate the arcanæ of nature, and lead to a detecting of those beauties that to the dull or feeble are never manifested—to vivify the impression received, and influence the treatment of the subject. Landscape painting must not be underrated; while we expatiate on the refinement, spirituality, and difficulties of the expression in sculpture and in historical painting, we are apt to forget that external nature has also a soul to express, and that analogous subtleties exist in the art of the landscape painter. Expression in historical or figure painting is in the form as the artist sees it before him, and to catch it is doubtless the highest effort of delineation: but to seize the harmonious spirit of external nature as it reveals itself through the mysterious and fleeting glories of light and shade and colour,—to discover the secrets by which the effects of chiaroscuro are produced, and untwist the varied links that bind the soul of harmony,—to do this is also a task not unworthy of the highest minds.

I come now to the third and concluding branch of my subject, viz. the tendency of art,—what in its present state it does.

The question what art does must receive in reference to its different branches, very different answers. The influence of the poet has been wide in its sphere of operation, and great and ceaseless in its power. His page has not only been directly an instrument of the highest refinement and exaltation to the naturally gifted few, the elect of taste; but through the medium of their example it has conducted to the moral and intellectual improvement of the lowest in the social scale. The true poet, moreover, has succeeded in creating the taste by which he is duly appreciated: if we compare present society with that of the last century, or beginning of this, we shall find a regenerated taste in reference to literature generally: the morbid passion, for instance, of Byron and his followers so much in vogue not great while ago, is disappearing from our poetry, for it would no longer be tolerated; and the popularity of Scott and of Charles Dickens, the high moral aim of whose works contrasts so favourably with those of Fielding and Smollet, tells the same tale of the growth of a true refinement.

But whilst the poet is followed by all who think and feel, how few are the genuine recipients of the artist's inspirations, who enter his charmed circle and participate in his emotion! The true painter and sculptor are poets also who, through their respective media,—their epics and dramas—express truths as great and as sublime; but what, I would ask, have they done? where are their fruits of labour? They have, doubtless, given pleasure by the symmetry of form, contrast, and harmony of colour and light and shade, and all that go to make up sensuous beauty: they have gratified the animal feelings, but what nobler purpose in relation to the soul has been answered by their works? "Art," says a celebrated essayist, "has not yet come to its maturity, if it do not put itself abreast with the most potent influences of the world, if it is not practical and moral, if it do not stand in connexion with the conscience, if it do not make the poor and uncultivated feel that it addresses them with a voice of lofty cheer." This is true, but the failure complained of proceeds, I conceive, less from a want of power in our high art productions than from the prevalence of narrow and false views of art itself and of what constitutes the perfect and entire man. Pictorial and sculptural art speaks not merely to the intellect and senses, but to the heart and spirit, carrying "healing on its wings;" and there are inherent qualities in the human breast